



The President's Daily Brief

April 23, 1974



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

April 23, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Fighting on the Golan front yesterday was down for the third straight day from the intense level of last Friday. (*Page 2*)

Cambodian Government forces are in trouble 20 miles northwest of Phnom Penh. (*Page 3*)

The Burmese Government has more than held its own against the Communists in northeast Burma during the fighting this dry season. (*Page 4*)

Notes on USSR-Cuba and China appear on *Page 5*.

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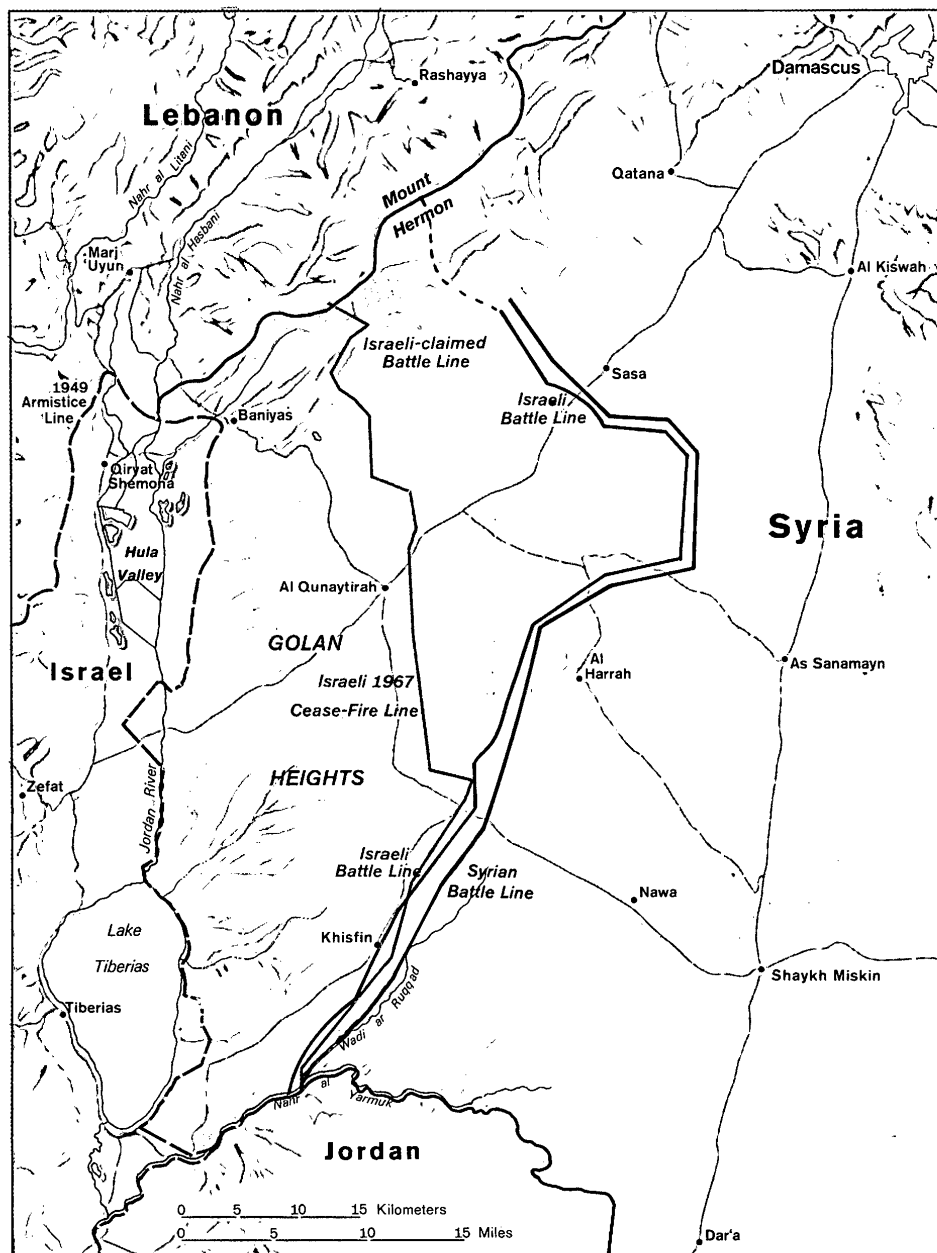
ISRAEL

Labor Minister Yitzhak Rabin, narrowly elected yesterday to succeed Mrs. Meir as Labor Party leader, faces an uphill struggle to forge a new cabinet. His chances do not seem good and new elections may have to be called this year.

Rabin's first task will be to convince the faction-ridden Labor Party to unite behind him, particularly the group led by Dayan and Shimon Peres. Peres, the only other candidate, made a surprisingly strong showing, an indication that opposition to Rabin within Labor is fairly widespread. The Labor Minister's other major hurdle in forming a cabinet is the reluctance of Labor's coalition partners--the National Religious Party and the Independent Liberal Party--to reconstitute the Labor-led coalition.

Rabin, only 52, is much younger than most of the country's national leadership. He is relatively untainted by the controversy about the government's handling of the war last October and has steadily gained popularity over recent months.

As prime minister, Rabin almost certainly would not significantly alter Israel's current domestic policies or its position on a Middle East settlement. He is pessimistic about Israel's chances of negotiating successfully with the Syrians.



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ISRAEL-SYRIA

Fighting on the Golan front yesterday was down for the third straight day from the intense level of last Friday. Syrian and Israeli forces exchanged tank, artillery, and small arms fire in the Mount Hermon area as well as along other sectors of the front.

[REDACTED]

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According to an Israeli military spokesman, Syrian aircraft yesterday overflowed portions of the Israeli salient in what probably was a reconnaissance mission. Israeli fighters were dispatched to intercept the aircraft, but no contact was made.

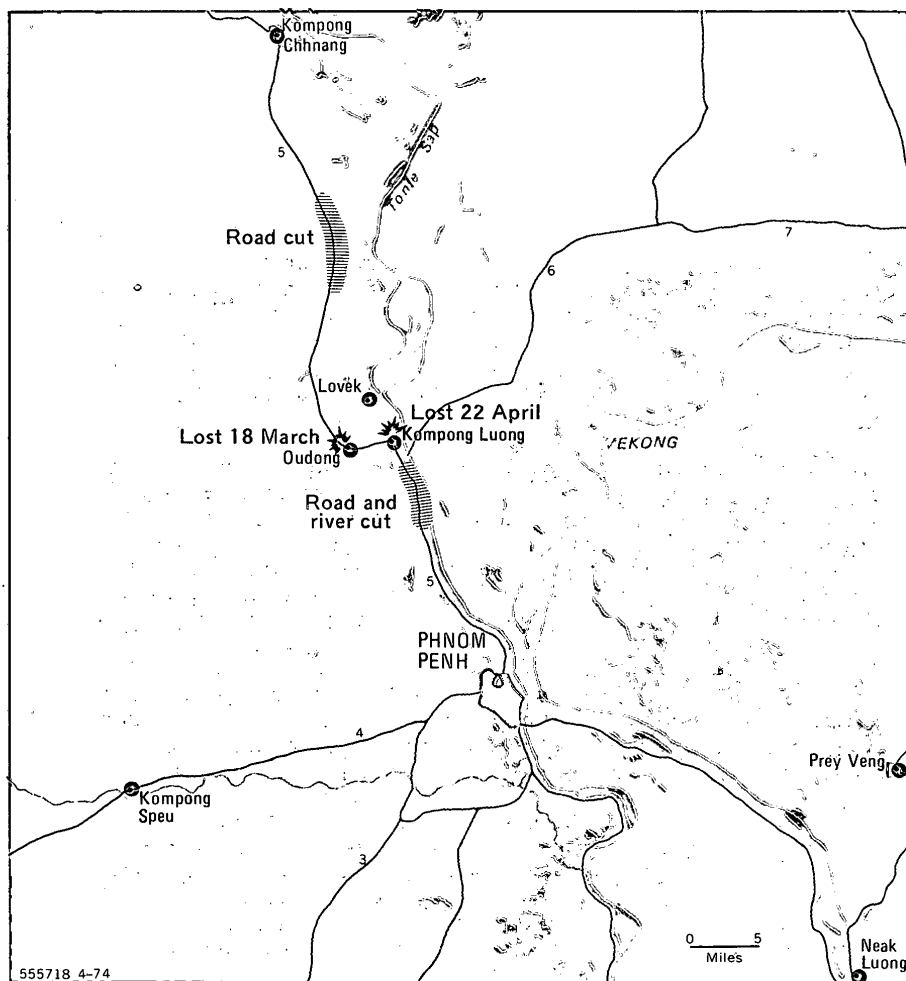
Israeli military authorities have officially denied a story in a Lebanese newspaper that Israeli forces are occupying a hill in Lebanon west of Mount Hermon.

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CAMBODIA: Phnom Penh Area



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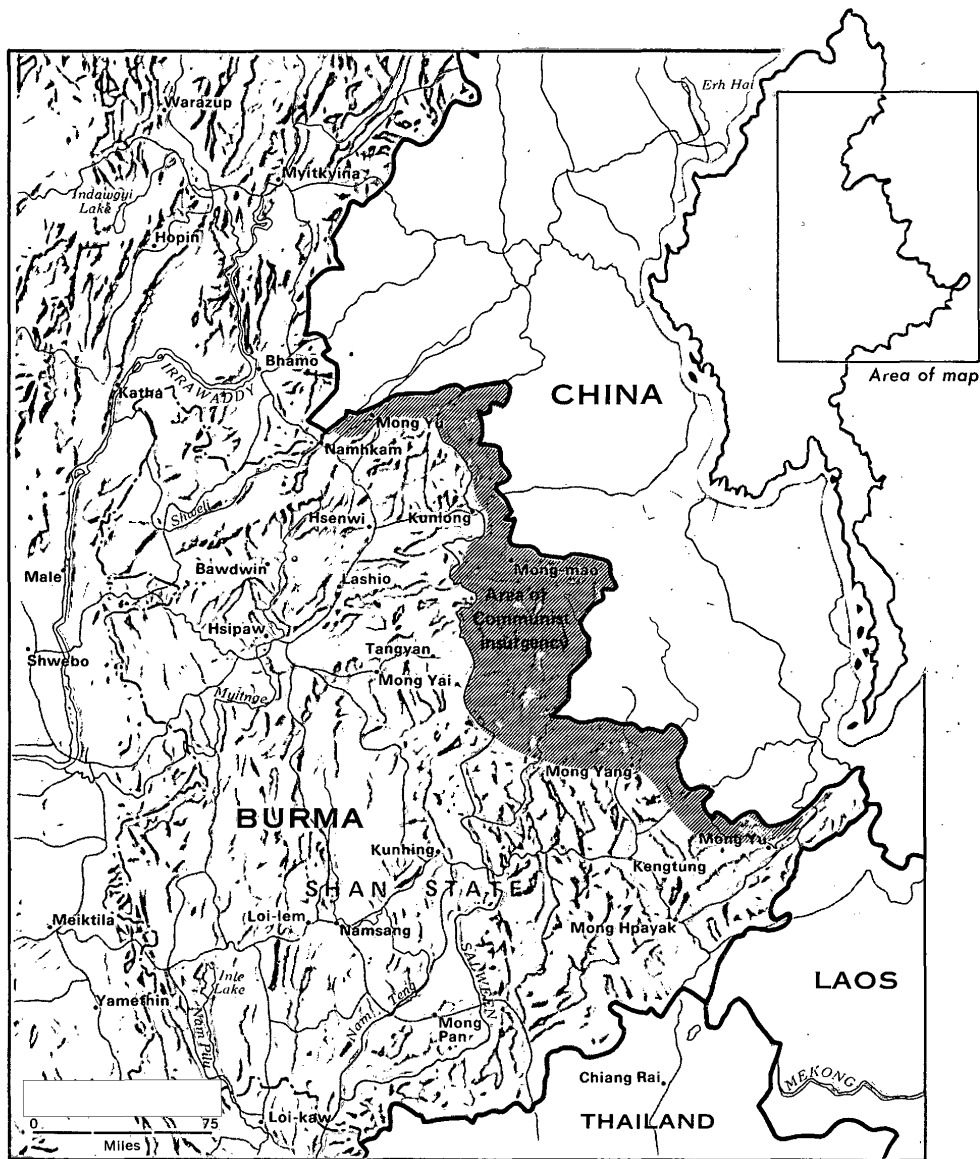
CAMBODIA

Government forces are in trouble 20 miles northwest of Phnom Penh. Although press reports of the loss of Kompong Luong over the weekend are overdrawn, the setback reduced Cambodian Army holdings in the area to the former training complex at Lovek, a few miles northwest of Kompong Luong.

Over 3,000 troops and 25,000 civilians are now isolated at Lovek. These include survivors from Kompong Luong; about half of the 1,900-man force formerly stationed there have arrived so far.

The Cambodian Army high command will have to decide in the next few days whether to make a stand at Lovek or to evacuate. A successful defense would depend heavily on the ability of the air force to provide tactical and logistic support. If Lovek is abandoned, government forces could be extracted by helicopter or could try to move overland to the Tonle Sap River, where they could go north to Kompong Chhnang by boat.

The Communists are likely to focus attention on Lovek soon. Recent intercepted messages show that a continuing flow of ammunition is going to insurgent units in this area, and Communist gunners are being urged to block passage of the Tonle Sap River just south of Kompong Luong.



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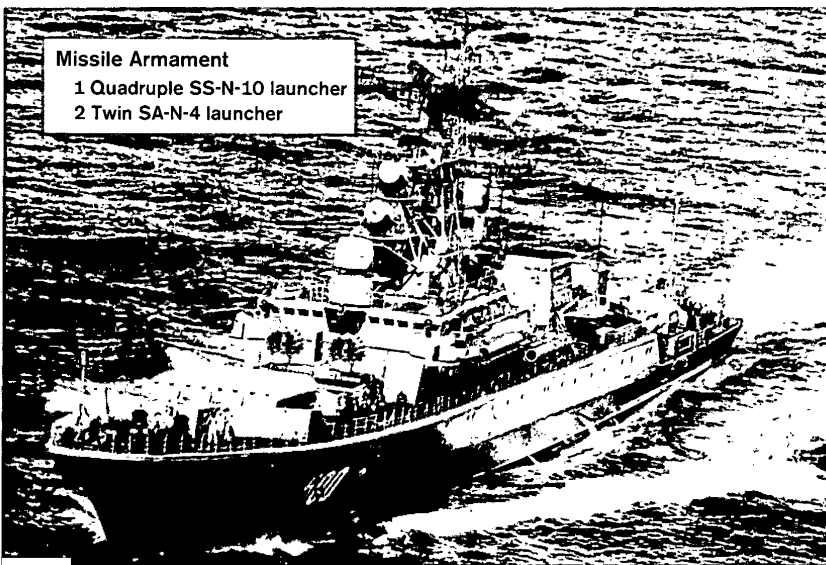
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BURMA

The Burmese Government has more than held its own against the Communists in northeast Burma during the fighting this dry season. When the monsoons begin late next month, Communist troops in that area will hold less territory than had been anticipated at the beginning of the year. The Communist threat to Kengtung, an important government administrative center in eastern Shan State, has abated since the Burmese Army routed a Communist unit and pushed it back toward the border.

It is unlikely that any major action will occur in the next few weeks. Burmese Army forces in the area are stretched too thin for significant initiatives. The Communists seem content to dig into their present positions as they prepare to wait out the monsoons.

Krivak-Class Guided Missile Destroyer



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NOTES

USSR-Cuba: Two Krivak-class guided-missile destroyers, now in the mid-Atlantic, appear to be headed for Cuba and participation in May Day celebrations. This would be the first visit there of this class of destroyer, although Soviet Navy ships have made ten previous port calls. Earlier visits to Cuba have usually included a submarine; there is as yet no firm evidence that one is accompanying these destroyers.

China: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] construction has taken place [REDACTED] The Chinese have excavated channels and turnaround areas to improve access from the sea to Pattle, Money, and Duncan islands.

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